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ABSTRACT

To conduct effective school board meetings, thirteen basic rules are presented. The rules prescribe that agendas and minutes should be studied prior to meetings; that meetings should be informal, open to citizens, and paced to avoid boredom and wasted time; that attorneys' reports should be in writing, and that the attorney should participate only on legal matters; that special presentations should be made early on the agenda; that citizens should participate in the discussion of regular agenda items with administrators on hand to respond; and, that the board chairman should control the meeting allowing equal participation of the members. (DW)

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# HOW TO CONDUCT EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS - B-26

ROBERT E. ALLEN, VICE CHAIRMAN - PAST PRESIDENT
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I REPRESENT A DISTRICT OF 4,000 STUDENTS FROM A CITY OF 30,000 PEOPLE AND QUITE NATURALLY MY REMARKS WILL PERTAIN TO OUR BOARD MEETINGS WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE APPLICABLE TO YOURS DUE TO SIZE, ATTENDANCE, CONFLICT, ETC., BUT SHOULD STILL BE APPROPRIATE OR SIMILAR IN SOME WAYS.

THE FOLLOWING ARE BASIC RULES WHICH SHOULD BE OBSERVED, IF YOU ARE TO HAVE AN EFFECTIVE AND ENJOYABLE BOARD MEETING:

1. THE AGENDA, LIST OF BILLS, COPIES OF CORRESPONDENCE AND ALL OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION FOR THE MEETING SHOULD BE IN THE BOARD MEMBERS HANDS FROM 3-7 DAYS BEFORE THE MEETING. THIS SHOULD INCLUDE A COPY OF ALL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS WHICH ARE TO BE APPROVED.

THE BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD READ ALL OF THIS BEFORE THE MEETING AND, IF POSSIBLE, HAVE ANY QUESTIONS RESOLVED BEFORE THE MEETING. DON'T WAIT FOR THE BOARD MEETING TO QUESTION SPECIFIC BILLS, MINUTES CORRECTIONS, ETC. GIVE YOUR SUPT. A FAIR CHANCE TO RESOLVE OR EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES BEFORE THE MEETING. DON'T BE AN ACTOR ON THE STAGE.

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2. HAVE COPIES OF THE AGENDA AVAILABLE FOR ALL GUESTS AND, IF POSSIBLE, ARRIVE A LITTLE EARLY TO MINGLE WITH THEM OR EVEN HAVE A CUP OF COFFEE BEFORE THE MEETING STARTS. OUR BOARD HAS A COFFEE POT FOR THE BOARD AND ITS GUESTS WHICH IS AVAILABLE DURING THE ENTIRE MEETING.

3. WE DO NOT READ THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING FOR APPROVAL, BUT MERELY APPROVE THEM, AS SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD, WITH ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS, IF REQUIRED. THERE IS NOTHING MORE BORING OR USELESS TO A BOARD OR GUEST THAN SITTING THROUGH THE READING OF OLD MINUTES, BILLS, COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

4. THE BOARD CHAIRMAN SHOULD GUIDE THE BOARD SWIFTLY THROUGH SUCH ITEMS AS ROLL CALL, PRAYER, SALUTE TO THE FLAG, APPROVAL OF MINUTES, APPROVAL OF BILLS, TREASURERS REPORT, ETC., AS MOST OF THESE ITEMS ARE AUTOMATIC AND HAVE HAD PRIOR AUTHORIZATION.

5. THE ATTORNEY'S REPORT SHOULD BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE BOARD WITH THE AGENDA AND THEY SHOULD DECIDE IF IT REQUIRES DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING. THE SCHOOL BOARD ATTORNEY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED AN UNDUE AMOUNT OF TIME JUST BECAUSE HE IS IN A MINIATURE COURT ROOM. THE ATTORNEY SHOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING UNLESS HE IS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED BY A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OR IF HE FEELS THAT THE BOARD IS MAKING A POTENTIAL LEGAL PROBLEM DECISION.

6. THE BOARD CHAIRMAN SHOULD CONDUCT OR RUN THE MEETING A ND NOT DELEGATE, BY DEFAULT, THIS JOB TO THE SECRETARY OR THE SUPERINTENDENT.

7. IF POSSIBLE, THE BOARD MEETING SHOULD BE CONDUCTED IN AN INFORMAL OR COMFORTABLE MANNER. IF THE BOARD MEETING IS STIFF AND FORMAL, IT WILL NOT ENCOURAGE CITIZENS TO ATTEND AND MAY GENERATE ANIMOSITY.

8. IF THERE ARE SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS, SUCH AS THE SCHOOL ARCHITECT, BID OPENINGS, SPECIAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS, ETC, THEY SHOULD BE MADE BEFORE THE BOARD GETS INTO THE FULL AGENDA IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE BOARD'S AND GUEST'S UNDIVIDED ATTENTION. AS THE EVENING GETS LATE, THE BOARD'S ATTENTION TENDS TO STRAY AND MOST GUESTS LEAVE.

IN THE MATTER OF BID OPENINGS, WE MAKE THEM AVAILABLE FOR ANYONE TO SEE AND THEN REFER THEM TO THE ADMINISTRATION FOR TABULATION, APPROVAL BY THE REQUESTING BODY AND AWARD TO THE LOWEST AND BEST BID. WE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TABULATE AND REVIEW THE BIDS AT THE MEETING. WE TAKE BIDS ON OUR FISCAL AGENT AND WOULD TAKE BIDS ON OUR ARCHITECT FEE EXCEPT THE ARCHITECTS WON'T COOPERATE

9. AS YOU MOVE INTO THE REGULAR AGENDA OF SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT, OLD BUSINESS, NEW BUSINESS, COMMUNICATIONS, IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT THE CHAIRMAN BE THE CHAIRMAN AND RUN THE MEETING. HE SHOULD ALLOW AMPLE DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD MEMBERS, BUT SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO RECOMMEND THAT A MOTION TO DO SOMETHING IS IN ORDER RATHER THAN ALLOW A REHASH AND RESTATEMENT OF ALREADY PRESENTED IDEAS AND POSITIONS. THERE IS NOTHING WORSE THAN ALL FIVE BOARD MEMBERS SITTING AROUND THE TABLE WAITING FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO MAKE THE MOTION.

10. IN OUR BOARD MEETINGS, WE NORMALLY ALLOW GUESTS/CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSIONS, WHICH IS SOMETIMES DANGEROUS ON A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE WITH OPPOSITE SIDES PRESENT. AGAIN, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT WE HAVE HISTORICALLY CONDUCTED OUR MEETINGS IN A RELAXED AND INFORMAL MANNER WHICH IS GOOD FOR US BUT MAY NOT BE GOOD FOR YOU.

11. THE CHAIRMAN SHOULD NOT LET ANYONE DOMINATE THE BOARD MEETING, INCLUDING HIMSELF. MUST HAVE PATIENCE OF JOB AND WISDOM OF SOLOMON.

12. ALWAYS HAVE ENOUGH ADMINISTRATORS ON HAND TO BE ABLE TO HANDLE MOST QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR. A CITIZEN SHOULD NOT LEAVE THE MEETING WITHOUT HAVING HIS QUESTIONS ANSWERED EVEN THOUGH HE MAY NOT LIKE OR AGREE WITH THE ANSWER.

13. IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET MORE OUT OF OUR BOARD MEETINGS, WE HAVE GONE TO TWO BOARD MEETINGS A MONTH WITH ONE OF THEM RESERVED FOR ALL BUSINESS ITEMS AND THE OTHER ONE RESERVED FOR "EDUCATION OF THE BOARD" -- PRESENTATIONS BY THE FACULTY TO THE BOARD.

IN SUMMATION, YOU CAN ONLY HAVE AN "EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETING" IF YOU HAVE AN EFFECTIVE CHAIRMAN OR PRESIDENT AND A BOARD THAT DEMANDS ONE FROM ITS STAFF.

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